

Fight the Bite

By Andy Kunasek, Maricopa County Supervisor, District 3

They bite, suck blood and leave a bump. They have a long-standing reputation for being pesky, but as transporters of West Nile Virus (WNV) mosquitoes can be dangerous.

This year's first locally-acquired human West Nile Virus case in Maricopa County was reported in June. The man, in his fifties, was treated for mild symptoms and did not require hospitalization. Thanks to the diligence of our Maricopa County experts and employees, we do not have nearly the number of positive mosquito samples and human cases as we did at this time last year.

Mosquitoes are typically more active between May and October, but summer is high season for West Nile, so this is the time we begin to see an increase in positive mosquito reports. With your awareness and cooperation, we can continue to keep WNV at bay.

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Approximately 20 percent of people infected will experience flu-like symptoms three to fifteen days after the mosquito bite. Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Swollen lymph glands
- Skin rash on the chest, stomach and back

Although anyone could contract the disease, individuals who have a compromised immune system or those over the age of 50 are generally at a higher risk for severe symptoms. These symptoms may include meningitis, encephalitis or paralysis.

All Maricopa County residents should continue to take precautions, including:

- Avoid outdoor activity before dawn and after dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- When outdoors wear a mosquito repellant (follow label instructions, especially for use on children).
- When outdoors wear long sleeves and long pants to prevent mosquito bites.
- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around the home by removing standing water in potted plants, tires and other containers.
- Repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Report green pools and mosquito problems to the County

My wife and I regularly take our three young daughters fishing, horseback riding and hiking. Though we are confident about evading WNV this year due to county safeguards that are in place, we don't let down our guard. The media has been doing a good job of helping us get the word about how to "fight the bite." If we all take care, we can prevent WNV from spreading.

For more information on West Nile Virus -- or to report standing water, green pools, mosquito problems in your neighborhood -- or for WNV dead bird drop-off locations -- or to schedule a presentation for your group -- please visit www.maricopa.gov/wnv or call (602) 506-0700.